



LOCAL HELP FOR PEOPLE WITH MEDICARE

ASK SHIP

YOUR MONTHLY MEDICARE Q&A

Q: I have heard on the news that there are outbreaks of hepatitis in some areas. What can I do to protect myself and does Medicare help pay?

A: Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver caused by a virus, resulting in acute and chronic liver disease. Hepatitis is contagious.

Fortunately, Medicare can help keep you protected from the most common types of viral hepatitis strains—Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

Hepatitis A is usually transmitted person-to-person through the fecal-oral route or consumption of contaminated food or water. Hepatitis A does not result in chronic infection. Most adults with hepatitis A have symptoms, including fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, and jaundice, that usually

resolve within two months of infection.

The best way to prevent Hepatitis A infection is to get vaccinated. Generally, Medicare Part D (prescription drug coverage) covers Hepatitis A shots when medically necessary.

Hepatitis B virus spreads through contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person. People can also get infected by coming in contact with a contaminated object, where the virus can live for up to 7 days. Hepatitis B can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious illness that can lead to liver disease or liver cancer.

Medicare Part B covers Hepatitis B shots that can help prevent the disease. These are usually given as a series of 3 shots over a 6-month period. You

need all 3 shots for complete protection.

Hepatitis C is most commonly spread by exposure to contaminated blood or needles. The virus can live outside the body for up to four days. Medicare covers a one-time Hepatitis C screening test if your primary care doctor or practitioner orders it and you meet one of these conditions:

- You're at high risk because you have a current or past history of illicit injection drug use.
- You had a blood transfusion before 1992.
- You were born between 1945 and 1965.

If you have any questions about Medicare's coverage of Hepatitis treatments or prevention, or any other questions related to Medicare, contact SHIP at 1-800-452-4800, 1-866-846-0139 TDD or online at www.medicare.in.gov.